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Michael J. James

Sandra M. Estanek

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## Building the Capacity for Mission through Use of the *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities*: A Survey of Presidents and Senior Student Affairs Officers

Michael J. James  
Boston College, Massachusetts  
Sandra M. Estanek  
Canisius College, New York

*Dialogue about Catholic identity has been taking place at American Catholic colleges and universities since the publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* in 1990. That student affairs professionals do their work within the context of the mission of the university is a concept that has been accepted from the earliest stages of the establishment of student affairs as an independent profession in the beginning of the twentieth century. For the past 20 years, student affairs professionals at Catholic colleges and universities have been building their capacity for mission integration in a variety of professional development seminars and institutes, largely supported by the work of Catholic higher education associations and sponsoring religious communities, with the intention of increasing the presence and integration of the Catholic mission and religious charism at the institutions in which they work. The *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities* are the latest mission-driven resource to be developed at a national level in support of the continuing efforts by student affairs professionals and others working at Catholic colleges and universities to build capacity for mission-driven work.*

*This article describes the development of *The Principles* as a mission-centered resource for student affairs professionals at Catholic colleges and universities. This article further presents the findings of a survey of presidents and senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States and Canada regarding how *The Principles* are being utilized at their institutions to create mission-driven practices in student affairs work and to form mission-knowledgeable student affairs professionals. This article concludes with a discussion about the efficacy of *The Principles* to be used in continuing efforts across the diversity of institutions that constitute Catholic higher education in productive and meaningful ways to build a culture of mission integrated institutions.*

Dialogue about Catholic identity has been taking place at American Catholic colleges and universities since the publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* in 1990. In a variety of venues since 1990, student affairs professionals who work at Catholic colleges and universities have discussed the implications of the characteristics of Catholic higher education expressed in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* for their work. That student affairs professionals do their work within the context of the mission of the university is a concept that has been accepted from the earliest stages of the establishment of student affairs as an independent profession in the beginning of the twentieth century. This has been expressed in documents such as *The Student Personnel Point of View* (American Council on Education, 1937, 1949), *A Perspective on Student Affairs* (American Council on Education & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1987), *The Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association, 1996), and *Learning Reconsidered* (Keeling, 2006). These documents provided the foundation in student affairs practice and theory for a collaborative and peer-driven project that resulted in the development of the *Principles of Good Practice in Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities* (referred to hereafter as *The Principles*; Estanek & James, 2007). For the past 20 years, student affairs professionals at Catholic colleges and universities have been building their capacity for mission integration in a variety of professional development seminars and institutes, largely supported by the work of Catholic higher education associations and sponsoring religious communities, with the intention of increasing the presence and integration of the Catholic mission and religious charism at the institutions in which they work. *The Principles* are the latest mission-driven resource to be developed at a national level in support of the continuing efforts by student affairs professionals and others working at Catholic colleges and universities to build capacity for mission-driven work.

This article describes the development of *The Principles* as a mission-centered resource for student affairs professionals at Catholic colleges and universities. This article further presents the findings of a survey of presidents and senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States and Canada regarding how *The Principles* are being utilized at their institutions to create mission-driven practices in student affairs work and to form mission-knowledgeable student affairs professionals. This article concludes with a discussion about the efficacy of *The Principles* to be used in continuing efforts across the diversity of institutions that constitute Catholic higher education in productive and meaningful ways to build a culture of mis-

sion integrated institutions.

### Capacity Building and Mission

The term *capacity building* originated in the context of international economic development. The concept was first utilized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1991. It changed the focus of how to think about economic development from an emphasis on the advice and expectations coming from outside experts from developed nations to an emphasis on the process of “creat[ing] an enabling environment” in developing nations that entailed a “long term, continuing process in which all stakeholders participate” (UNDP, 1991). Most recently, the UNDP defined capacity building as “activities that bring about transformation that is generated and sustained over time from within” (UNDP, 2009, p. 5.).

The term has come to be used in other contexts as well, particularly in the literature on improving the effectiveness of not-for-profit organizations. Sobeck and Agius (2007) defined capacity building in this context as providing “training, technical assistance, and other resources to achieve the mission” (p. 237). The concept also has come to be associated with evaluation and assessment for the purposes of organizational effectiveness and accountability (De Vita & Fleming, 2001).

In the context of this paper, the concept of capacity building is useful in describing the process in which student affairs professionals who work at Catholic colleges and universities have been engaging since the publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1990). To paraphrase the definitions above, for the past 20 years student affairs professionals who work at Catholic institutions have been engaging collaboratively in activities that better enable them to contribute to the mission of their respective institutions. It is important to understand the implementation of *The Principles* as one of a number of strategic mission-building efforts in an ongoing process to enrich student affairs in Catholic higher education.

### Building the Capacity for Mission-Driven Student Affairs

The publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1990) initiated widespread discussions on American Catholic college and university campuses about the institutions’ “Catholic identity.” Those initial discussions often focused on the faculty and academic affairs and did not include discussions of student life or

the role of student affairs professionals, although the implications of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* for student affairs were understood (Estanek & Larrey, 1998; Salmi, 2003). In a mixed method study of SSAOs at Catholic colleges and universities, Estanek (1996) found that presidents, senior academic officers, and student affairs staff members all looked to the SSAO to integrate the Catholic identity of the institution with student life. Hirt (2006) has called this role interpreter: "Their role entails explicating the purpose of student affairs to institutional leaders and faculty, elucidating student affairs professional practice and the religious tenets of the campus, and translating the role of student affairs into a sectarian context" (p. 39). Estanek (1996) found that the SSAOs understood this role but struggled to affect this integration of student affairs and Catholic identity because they believed that they did not know enough about the Catholic tradition. The majority of SSAOs were, and still are, lay men and women who were trained in student affairs at secular institutions (Estanek, 1996; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Schaller & Boyle, 2006). Although the majority of the SSAOs were Catholic, they did not have sufficient knowledge and formation to assist them in their role of interpreter of the Catholic identity of the institution in the realm of student life. Nor did they have somewhere to go to learn. The Jesuit Association of Student Affairs Professionals (JASPA), founded in 1954, provides this opportunity for student life professionals who work at the 28 Jesuit institutions, but there was no similar opportunity for professionals at other nearly 200 Catholic colleges and universities.

In 1995, the Institute for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges (ISACC) was founded to provide such an opportunity for learning, formation, and integration for student affairs professionals at all Catholic colleges and universities (Estanek & Larrey, 1998). Funded in part by the Lilly Endowment, ISACC was a five-day summer program for teams of student affairs professionals, including the SSAO. The fourfold purpose of ISACC was,

- 1) to learn about the Catholic intellectual tradition; 2) to network with colleagues at Catholic institutions across the nation and internationally; 3) to discuss how to ground student affairs practice in Catholic identity; and 4) to apply this understanding to practical concerns on campus. (Estanek & Larrey, 1998, p. 51)

ISACC summer programs were held from 1996-1999. After four years, over 220 student affairs professionals from 59 Catholic colleges and universities had attended the institute. Instead of continuing ISACC, the Association for Student

Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU) was founded in 1999 and an annual conference replaced the annual ISACC institute in the summer.

Ten years later, in 2010, over 150 Catholic colleges and universities in the United States and Canada are members of ASACCU (Gallagher, 2010). ASACCU is an independent organization, but it is affiliated with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU). It regularly collaborates with the JASPA, and many Jesuit institutions are members of both organizations. Hence, over the past 15 years, an effective network for student affairs professionals in Catholic higher education has been created for those who wish to participate.

In a follow-up study of SSAOs, Estanek (2005) found the respondents to be more comfortable with their roles as “interpreters” than the respondents had been in 1996. The sense of isolation that had been evident in the 1996 study was gone. The 2005 study found that SSAOs were more confident of their knowledge of the Catholic intellectual tradition. The study also found that the majority of student affairs professionals regularly discussed how their work is connected to the Catholic identity of the institution, with over 91% of respondents indicating they had conversations at least once per semester or more frequently. This differed greatly from the 1996 study where the common findings were that Catholic identity was not discussed. As a result of the professional networks that had been created for student affairs officers since the 1996 study, these professionals were no longer on their own to interpret the Catholic identity of the institution. However, Estanek’s (2005) follow-up study revealed that the specific approaches and strategies for mission interpretation were idiosyncratic to the resources and collaborative leadership between SSAOs and their presidents.

By 2005, the necessity for and possibility of a more widely agreed upon and public framework became evident. The very diversity of Catholic higher education that made adopting general principles difficult made doing so necessary. Some analysts, such as Morey and Piderit (2006), were critical of student life at most Catholic institutions and offered both analysis and proposals to address student culture on campus. It became increasingly clear that others would define the framework for understanding and evaluating student life at Catholic colleges and universities if the practitioners themselves did not do so. This is consistent with the “capacity building” framework. The perspectives of “outside experts” such as Morey and Piderit can be useful; however, lasting change will come from the long-term development of an “enabling environment” by the student affairs professionals themselves.



The need to demonstrate and assess the relationship of student life to the mission of the institution also was increasingly recognized by accrediting bodies (Estanek, James, & Norton, 2006). This need became evident as well during the first Rome Seminar, which was sponsored by the ACCU in 2005 as “an opportunity for leaders of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States to dialogue with Vatican officials” (Estanek & James, 2007). Fifteen years after the initial discussions of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1990) focused primarily on the academic life of the institution, the question of how to demonstrate and assess the contribution of student life programs and policies to the Catholic mission of the institution was raised at a meeting held at the Vatican during the seminar. The necessity of having a document such as *The Principles* became clear.

*The Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities*

*The Principles* (Estanek & James, 2007) emerged organically as a next logical step in this history. The document represents “the ideals, challenges, expectations, and aspirations of student affairs professionals who work at Catholic colleges and universities” (p. 2). The purpose is to “provide a framework for reflection and conversation, planning, staff development, and assessment for student affairs professionals who work at Catholic colleges and universities” (Estanek & James, 2007, p. 6). The document borrowed the general framework of “principles” from a 1996 document published jointly by the two major student affairs organizations, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (Blimling & Whitt, 1999), which would be familiar to student affairs professionals.

The development of a document was authorized by the leadership groups of the ACCU, the ASACCU, the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), and the JASPA in meetings in 2006. A foundation grant was secured to support the project. A diverse group of writers from across Catholic higher education and student affairs assembled in November 2006 and wrote the first draft.

The draft was discussed at the national meetings of the three organizations in 2007. At the meeting of the ACCU, the document was shared with presidents of Catholic institutions and their feedback was solicited. While the presidents would not be directly responsible for implementing *The Principles*,

their support for the initiative on their campuses was seen as essential. The document was shared at the national conferences of the ASACCU and at the JASPA to seek feedback from those persons who would be directly responsible for implementation, including the SSAO. The final version was approved and disseminated to all Catholic colleges and universities in the United States and Canada in December 2007.

At the core of the document are eight principles that characterize student affairs practice at Catholic colleges and universities (Estanek & James, 2007). *The Principles* state that good practice at Catholic colleges and universities:

1. Welcomes all students into a vibrant campus community that celebrates God's love for all.
2. Grounds policies, practices, and decisions in the teachings and living tradition of the Church. Builds and prepares the student affairs staff to make informed contributions to the Catholic mission of the institution.
3. Enriches student integration of faith and reason through the provision of co-curricular learning opportunities.
4. Creates opportunities for students to experience, reflect, and act from a commitment to justice, mercy, and compassion, and in light of Catholic social teaching to develop respect and responsibility for all, especially those most in need.
5. Challenges students to high standards of personal behavior and responsibility through the formation of character and virtues.
6. Invites and accompanies students into the life of the Catholic Church through prayer, liturgy, sacraments, and spiritual direction.
7. Seeks dialogue among religious traditions and with contemporary culture to clarify beliefs and fosters mutual understanding in the midst of tensions and ambiguities.
8. Assists students in discerning and responding to their vocations, understanding potential professional contributions, and choosing particular career directions. (pp. 2-4)

Following publication and dissemination in 2007, individual presentations focused on the articulation and application of the document have been given at the national meetings of the three sponsoring organizations, at workshops for groups of schools, and in consultations with individual campuses. Each of these venues provided an opportunity to share how *The Principles* were being utilized



on campus, again with the purpose of further increasing the capacity of student affairs professionals to contribute to the Catholic mission of their institutions.

### Methodology

During the past 3 years, individual colleges and universities have been implementing *The Principles* in a wide variety of ways. This is the first study to document detailed descriptions of the early stages of implementation of *The Principles* across Catholic colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. This study further offers an assessment regarding to what degree presidents and SSAOs of Catholic colleges and universities believe *The Principles* are an effective resource for building the institutional capacity for mission integration. Consequently, the purposes of this research are: 1) to identify the degree to which Catholic colleges and universities have utilized *The Principles*; 2) to learn how *The Principles* have been implemented; and, 3) to review the attitudes of presidents and SSAOs regarding the efficacy of *The Principles*. Preliminary results of the survey were used to inform the development of an assessment process or tool for *The Principles*.

### Instrumentation

A 22-item electronic survey for presidents and a 32-item survey for SSAOs were designed to address the research questions. The survey instrument items included both open-ended and pre-categorized responses for the SSAOs. The survey instrument for presidents included the same questions contained in the SSAO survey excluding the open-ended questions. The following areas of inquiry were used to collect data that could identify the degree of mission capacity building that has taken place at respondent institutions via an application of *The Principles*: the knowledge of *The Principles* by the president and SSAO; the source of knowledge of *The Principles* by the president and SSAO; applications and implementation of *The Principles* by the president and SSAO; and impressions of the president and SSAO regarding the usefulness of *The Principles* for mission integration and staff development. All survey respondents were anonymous.

### Participants

A survey was sent to 183 presidents and 179 SSAOs at the Catholic colleges and universities that received *The Principles* in 2007. The same mailing list that was

used to distribute *The Principles* was used to develop the contact list and invitation to participate in the research. The email invitation contained an overview of the research, a hyperlink to the electronic questionnaire, and a consent form with instructions for its completion. Potential respondents received three rounds of requests to participate over the course of a 3-month period. Respondents were not given the option to complete a paper survey. The response rate for the presidents' survey was 33% (61 respondents). The response rate for the SSAOs survey was 48% (86 respondents). Survey data do not identify the specific institution, president, or SSAO. Findings from the survey are presented in aggregate percentages or represented by anonymous samples of responses to the open-ended questions.

### Analysis

Data were analyzed by identifying respondent-reported evidence for the degree to which *The Principles* are being used by presidents and SSAOs as a resource for building mission capacity within the student affairs division. Additionally, the presidents and SSAOs responses were analyzed for evidence that *The Principles* were known to inform similar mission building activities across other units of the campus (i.e, faculty, trustees, students, and staff). The capacity for mission building is measured by the degree to which *The Principles* have been used to inform and direct the following activities across campus units and constituencies: reflection, strategic planning, professional development, and assessment. Precategorized questions were tallied by percentages. All open-ended responses were analyzed employing a triangulated multi-reader process. Themes and categories emerged from the separate researcher readings. Common themes and interpretations were established through a process of manual text analysis.

### Results

#### Knowledge of *The Principles*

Ninety-seven percent of presidents and 98% of the SSAOs acknowledged having read *The Principles* booklet. Twenty-seven percent of presidents and 73% of SSAOs indicated having requested additional copies for campus distribution. Presidents learned about *The Principles* primarily through their participation in a discussion session and/or presentation session about *The Principles* at the 2006 and 2007 annual meetings of the ACCU. SSAOs learned about *The*

*Principles* primarily through their participation in the annual meetings of the ASACCU and the JASPA, as well as through the national direct mailing of *The Principles* to SSAOs.

### Implementation of *The Principles*

Nearly 60% of presidents reported having initially shared and engaged in discussion about *The Principles* with their SSAO. Twenty-seven percent of presidents reported sharing *The Principles* with their President's Cabinet (senior administrative officers reporting directly to the president), 25% had shared the document with the institution's senior mission officer, 22% had shared *The Principles* with the senior academic officer of the institution, and 12% had shared the document with their board of trustees.

Over 85% of SSAOs reported having initially shared and engaged in discussion about *The Principles* with the student affairs staff: 55% of SSAOs shared *The Principles* with their president while 33% engaged in a discussion about *The Principles* with their president; 27% shared and 16% discussed *The Principles* with the board of trustees; 27% shared and 25% discussed the document with the senior mission officer; 23% shared and 19% discussed *The Principles* with the senior academic officer; and 23% shared and 16% discussed them with student groups on campus.

### Outcomes of *The Principles*

The data reported in this section of the research have to do with the degree to which *The Principles* have been used (indicated on a scale from not at all to significantly with a category of *I don't know*) to facilitate formal reflection, strategic planning, professional and student development, and assessment related to mission and identity across the following campus constituent groups: faculty; administrators; staff; students; alumni/ae; trustees; and, the sponsoring religious community. These uses of *The Principles* were suggested in the document itself.

**Reflection and conversation.** Over 52% of presidents reported that *The Principles* have been used to facilitate reflection and conversation at a moderate or significant level with administrators and staff across the campus. Twenty-five percent reported that the document has been used to facilitate reflection and conversation at a moderate or significant level with students, and over 60% reported that *The Principles* have been used minimally or not at all to facilitate

reflection and conversation with faculty, alumni, trustees, and the sponsoring religious community.

Over 73% of SSAOs reported that *The Principles* have been used to facilitate reflection and conversation at a moderate or significant level with student affairs staff. For example, one SSAO reported,

It [*The Principles*] is embedded in all of our practices. We have our own principles document that highlights our practices and congruence with Catholic and Jesuit mission/identity within Student Affairs. *The Principles* document is regularly used in training and is presented at the board of trustees.

In another example, the target group for reflection and conversation about *The Principles* was the student development program directors. This SSAO stated,

Last year we devoted about 45 minutes at each of our monthly meetings to one of *The Principles*, and then a 90-minute summary of our work was presented at a divisional all-staff meeting. This year we are doing an in-depth focus on the individual principles that were identified as the most challenging for us.

Over 26% of SSAOs reported that *The Principles* have been used to facilitate reflection and conversation at a moderate or significant level with administrators, and over 25% reported that *The Principles* have been used to facilitate reflection and conversation at a moderate or significant level with students. Over 60% of SSAOs reported that *The Principles* have been used to facilitate reflection and conversation at a minimal level or not at all with faculty, administrators, students, alumni/ae, and trustees.

**Strategic planning.** Over 33% of presidents reported that *The Principles* have been used in strategic planning at a moderate or significant level with administrators and staff across the campus, while over 60% reported that *The Principles* have been used minimally or not at all in strategic planning with faculty, students, alumni, trustees, and the sponsoring religious community.

Sixty-six percent of SSAOs reported *The Principles* have been used in strategic planning at a moderate or significant level with student affairs staff. A number of SSAOs described specifically how *The Principles* play a role in their strategic planning processes. For example, one SSAO described the methods of strategic planning for which *The Principles* were utilized: “in student affairs

we have connected them [*The Principles*] to our strategic priorities, and also to our learning outcomes for student affairs. We use them as a foundation and guide for yearly objectives, and new initiatives.” Another SSAO reported that “the SSAO keeps *The Principles* in mind when setting priorities for the budget, when hiring professionals, and when developing programs.” According to another SSAO, “[*The Principles*] are integrated into departmental and division planning processes, documents, status reporting, assessments, and companion implementation plans.” Yet another reported,

We have used the discernment item number eight [Assist students in discerning and responding to their vocations, understanding potential professional contributions, and choosing particular career directions] most often for coordinating programs within the students affairs division, especially with career counseling and multicultural affairs.

Over 70% of SSAOs reported that *The Principles* have been used minimally or not at all in strategic planning with faculty, administrators, students, alumni, and trustees.

**Professional and student development.** Over 50% of presidents reported that *The Principles* have been used moderately or significantly for the professional development of staff, 33% reported that the document has been used moderately or significantly for the professional development of administrators and students, and over 60% reported that *The Principles* have been used minimally or not at all for the professional development with the faculty, alumni/ae, trustees, and the sponsoring religious community.

Sixty-three percent of SSAOs reported that *The Principles* have been used moderately or significantly for the professional development of the student affairs staff. SSAOs described how the document has been utilized in a variety of professional development settings and activities. For instance, one SSAO explained that *The Principles* were used at their annual retreat: “We have looked at each principle and discussed as a staff what it means and how does it influence what we do? We have also taken each principle and developed a staff activity as part of the discussion.” Another SSAO offered that the division of student affairs at this institution utilized *The Principles* at an annual staff planning day as well as for Brown Bag lunch conversations, and the process to develop divisional goals. This SSAO further noted that,

Just last week we discussed how we could use *The Principles* document for new staff orientation and staff development more directly. Our hope is to use this document as one of the primary texts in our staff orientation and development planning and include it in all professional position expectations, and performance evaluations. We will use it in staff training, in staff resource manuals, for departmental programs, services and targeted intentional programming initiatives.

Over 70% of SSAOs reported that *The Principles* have been used minimally or not at all for the professional development with the faculty, administrators, staff, students, alumni/ae, and trustees.

**Mission assessment.** Thirty-four percent of presidents responded that *The Principles* have been used moderately or significantly in the assessment of mission and identity with staff, 25% responded they have been used moderately or significantly in the assessment of mission and identity with administrators, and over 55% responded that *The Principles* have been used minimally or not at all in the assessment of mission and identity with administrators, students, and the sponsoring religious community. Over 70% of presidents responded that *The Principles* have been used minimally or not at all in the assessment of mission and identity with faculty, alumni/ae, and trustees.

Thirty-eight percent of SSAOs responded that *The Principles* have been used moderately or significantly in the assessment of mission and identity with student affairs staff. Among the 38% of SSAOs who responded that *The Principles* have been used as an approach to mission assessment, some reported that the document has been used in annual performance reviews.

Another SSAO stated that, "Due to our outcomes based approach, we are developing a department-wide assessment piece using *The Principles*. Currently, we have developed the assessment piece [informed by *The Principles*] for ministry and residence life." A politically astute SSAO acknowledged that "this [assessment] is a delicate issue since we want to stay away from some "score" to express these [mission] themes. So, we are mapping *The Principles* against our work and strategic plan initiatives to identify strengths and gaps." This same SSAO went on further to say that, "this evaluation/assessment effort will shape planning and next steps with regard to program development, staff development, and more generally to our planning." Over 70% of SSAOs responded that *The Principles* have been used minimally or not at all in the assessment of mission and identity with faculty, administrators, staff, students, alumni/ae, and trustees.



### Efficacy of *The Principles*

The data reported in this section of the research have to do with the degree to which *The Principles* could be or have the potential to be used (indicated on a scale from not at all to significantly with a category I don't know) to facilitate formal reflection, strategic planning, professional and student development, and assessment related to mission and identity across the following campus constituent groups: faculty; administrators; staff; students; alumni/ae; trustees; and, the sponsoring religious community.

**Reflection and conversation.** Over 80% of presidents indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for reflection and conversation with faculty, administrators, staff, and students, 74% indicated that the document could be used moderately or significantly for reflection and conversation with trustees, 55% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly with the sponsoring religious community, and 32% indicated that they could be used moderately or significantly with alumni/ae.

Ninety-seven percent of SSAOs indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for reflection and conversation with student affairs staff, over 80% reported that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for reflection and conversation with administrators, staff, students and trustees, 60% indicated that the document could be used moderately or significantly for reflection and conversation with faculty, and 44% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for reflection and conversation with alumni/ae. Not a single SSAO indicated that *The Principles* could not be used to some degree for reflection and conversation in all categories of campus constituents with the exception of a 5% response of not at all in the alumni/ae category.

**Strategic planning.** Over 70% of presidents indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for strategic planning with faculty, administrators, staff and trustees. Over 50% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for strategic planning with students and the sponsoring religious community, and 33% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for strategic planning with alumni/ae.

Ninety-three percent of SSAOs indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for strategic planning with the student affairs staff, over 70% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or

significantly for strategic planning with administrators and students, over 60% indicated that the document could be used moderately or significantly for strategic planning with staff and trustees, 47% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for strategic planning with faculty, and 38% thought they could be used moderately or significantly with alumni/ae.

**Professional and student development.** Over 76% of presidents indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for professional development with administrators, staff, and students, 66% indicated that they could be used moderately or significantly for professional development with faculty and trustees, and over 33% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for professional development with alumni/ae and the sponsoring religious community.

Over 93% of SSAOs indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for the professional development of the student affairs staff, over 70% indicated that they could be used moderately or significantly for the professional development of administrators and students, over 60% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for the professional development of staff and trustees, 51% indicated that the document could be used moderately or significantly for the professional development of faculty, and 37% agreed that they could be used moderately or significantly with alumni/ae.

**Mission assessment.** Over 70% of presidents indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for assessment with administrators and staff, over 50% indicated that they could be used moderately or significantly for assessment with faculty and students, over 40% indicated that the document could be used moderately or significantly for assessment with trustees and the sponsoring religious community, and 33% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for assessment with alumni/ae.

Eighty-four percent of SSAOs indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for assessment with the student affairs staff, 61% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for assessment with students, over 50% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for assessment with administrators, staff, and trustees, 42% indicated that *The Principles* could be used moderately or significantly for assessment with faculty, and 30% agreed that they could be used moderately or significantly with alumni/ae.

## Discussion

This study reveals that presidents and SSAOs are aware, knowledgeable, and in dialogue about the fundamental characteristics of mission integration via *The Principles* with one another and with others across the campus, contrasting Estanek's previous findings (1996, 2005). The shared conversations about *The Principles* took place, to the greatest extent, between presidents and their SSAOs and between SSAOs and their student affairs staff. However, the initial conversations reported about *The Principles* were not lost on other campus constituent groups, albeit shared to a lesser extent.

This study further reveals that presidents and SSAOs not only discussed *The Principles* but also utilized them in very specific ways for reflection, strategic planning, professional development, and assessment. SSAOs reported that *The Principles* were used to a significant degree with formal staff reflection on mission, strategic planning efforts—both short and long-term—and in a variety of professional development programs. To a lesser extent *The Principles* were being used within existing assessment approaches compared with other mission-related capacity building initiatives where *The Principles* were utilized.

This study acknowledges that SSAOs and presidents recognize the potential for *The Principles* to play a significant role in future mission-related capacity building efforts. It is most notable that the potential impact that *The Principles* may have on mission integration is not limited to the student affairs division. Both presidents and SSAOs recognize that *The Principles* could be used to an even greater degree than they are now utilized for reflection, strategic planning, professional development, and assessment across the campus with faculty, students, staff, trustees, the sponsoring religious community, and alumni/ae.

## Conclusion

### Critical Dynamics for Mission Capacity Building

It is important to note that the SSAOs who responded to this inquiry about the knowledge, use, and efficacy of *The Principles* are all members of the ASACCU and/or members of the JASPA. Respondent institutions represented in this research reflect the diversity of institutions across Catholic higher education in the United States and Canada. However, they all have in common an intentional participation in the decade-long conversation about mission integration and the meaning of Catholic identity facilitated by the ASACCU and

JASPA. The significant contribution to develop capacity for making meaning out of mission that this community of student affairs professionals at Catholic colleges and universities has achieved should not be overlooked or underestimated. It is this same community in dialogue that has facilitated receptivity to *The Principles*.

Grounding the efforts of mission capacity building within a community of professionals and peers informs our understanding of the data and is a critical characteristic of a process to integrate the mission of Catholic colleges and universities effectively within the practice of the student affairs profession. The evidence for this assertion is in the fact that *The Principles* were developed, offered, and are being utilized by SSAOs. It is also clear to the researchers that the leadership of SSAOs is a significant factor in the success and effectiveness of the processes and efforts to build mission capacity across a campus community. An SSAO is an effective leader in mission capacity building when that SSAO is knowledgeable of and participates in the review and discussion of Catholic college and university mission; participates in discussions with peers and other university leaders about mission; and, invests time in a variety of professional development opportunities with a focus on effective mission leadership offered by the ACCU, AJCU, ASACCU, and/or JASPA. Not only are SSAOs a critical component to animate the campus mission-centered efforts through approaches such as, reflection, professional development, strategic planning, and assessment, but SSAOs are continuing to establish a critical degree of capacity themselves to have the potential to frame and lead the mission conversation and direction in collaboration with their professional peers and colleagues across the campus.

### Limitations

Reflections on the potential use of *The Principles* as a mission capacity building resource for campus constituents beyond the president's office and the division of student affairs are limited in this study to the observations and perceptions of the president and SSAO. Further research about the use and the efficacy of *The Principles* with faculty, staff, students, trustees, alumni, and the sponsoring religious community would include an inquiry directly with those constituent groups.

Although the respondent SSAOs for this study described a variety of programs, procedures, policies, and expectations that were informed by use of *The Principles*, this study captures only a segment of SSAOs at Catholic colleges

and universities in the United States and Canada. Admittedly, the data collected for this study about the degree of knowledge about *The Principles*, their implementation, and use in planning and assessment represents a very brief period of time between the dissemination of the first edition of *The Principles* document and a 2-year period of access to *The Principles* document. More time is needed to let *The Principles* become more fully integrated by SSAOs and actively accessed as a resource on the campuses they serve.

Further research over time that seeks to learn about the effectiveness of *The Principles* would likely inquire with the student affairs professional and offices that report to the SSAO. This research gathered responses only from the SSAOs and presidents. For a more robust understanding about the use and impact of *The Principles* with other constituent groups across the campus (faculty, staff, students, trustees, alumni, and sponsoring religious community), researchers would be encouraged to gather data directly from representatives of each of those campus groups.

### Next Steps

In view of the responses from SSAOs in this study regarding the matter of mission assessment, it can be argued that assessment, although minimally undertaken by SSAOs or their division of student affairs, is an area for further application of *The Principles* as a possible tool to inform approaches and methodologies for good assessment practice. The findings of this study were a significant source to inform the development of the second edition of *The Principles* with a framework for assessment. The *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities: Second Edition with Diagnostic Queries* was published in 2010 (Estanek & James, 2010). Over 10,000 printed copies have been distributed to Catholic college and universities leaders across the United States.

The ACCU, ASACCU, and JASPA collaborated on the second edition. Another grant was secured to support a weekend retreat at Wye River and a group of writers was invited, including some of the original contributors who drafted *The Principles*. The planning group also included assessment experts and leaders in academic affairs and campus ministry. The group met for what is now referred to as Wye River II on November 12-14, 2009. As with *The Principles* themselves, several drafts of the diagnostic queries were shared among the participants in the weekend retreat. A provisional final version was shared for feedback at meetings of the sponsoring organizations and at the 2010 con-

ference of the American College Personnel Association. Finally, the composed diagnostic queries were reviewed for clarity and consistency with assessment experts. In the fall of 2010 the second edition of *The Principles* with a set of diagnostic queries were distributed and additional copies are available by request through the ACCU.

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*Michael J. James is a fellow of the Barbara and Patrick Roche Center for Catholic Education at Boston College, as well as a co-editor of the journal. Sandra M. Estanek is an associate professor of Graduate Education and Leadership and director of the master's program in College Student Personnel Administration at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York. Correspondence for this article should be sent to Dr. Michael J. James at michael.james@bc.edu.*